

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Equal Justice Works

Application ID: #14ND155964

Program Name: Employment Opportunity Legal Corps

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant referenced relevant and reliable sources and current information to support the need.

The applicant presents a compelling case for the need of legal aid based on the two studies that were referenced.

The applicant provides relevant and compelling evidence regarding the existing community need of helping remove legal issues for disadvantaged populations, and its impact on target population's economic viability. For example, the applicants' use of the statistics related to the number of individuals who fit this profile (11 million) and how this impacts their future success and wellness is compelling.

There is a strong use of statistics and references to multiple sources.

The application uses effective language to convey the problem/need, and overwhelming legal needs required to resolve the issue.

The applicant specifically cites details from not less than 7 recent (within 6 yrs.) major university, government, and independent surveys and studies outlining the problems/need and how they affect millions of Americans who are caught in the American justice system.

The applicant uses data to define the target population. Data cites that some 65,000,000 Americans under age twenty-five have criminal records and approximately two-thirds of the records are misdemeanors and less serious offenses, including arrests not leading to conviction.

The applicant provides data to support that the problem primarily affects people under the age of twenty-five.

The problem/need impacts the individual's ability to gain meaningful employment as an individual's criminal record

is readily accessible in national databases and is checked by employers, according to a 2010 Society of Human Resources Management survey.

The applicant provides data, citing as many as 11,000,000 unemployed American will not be considered for scarce jobs due to minor offenses, such as shoplifting candy, underage drinking, possessing small amounts of marijuana, or because of the trend of criminalizing misbehavior in high school.

The applicant includes a number of relevant studies that directly coincide with the Theory of Change approach used in the application and logic model.

The logic model is clear, and the outline shows a steady progression and flow between the resources, implementation, and evidence of change.

The applicant references two quasi-experimental studies to support their Theory of Change.

The studies provide evidence supporting that legal counsel has been effective in addressing the identified need and that AmeriCorps members will be highly successful in addressing the need.

The applicants' logic model and evaluation were described in detail and aligns with the problem/need and proposed intervention.

The Equal Justice Organization has previously utilized AmeriCorps member who were pre-law college students to address the problem/need. The AmeriCorps members' background made them effective in addressing the identified problem as they were able to complete legal research, conduct interviews, prepare cases to go to court, and work with practicing lawyers.

The applicant's success in solving the identified problems is based on research and knowledge of an extremely complex problem and a well planned intervention strategy.

The applicant has 21 years of experience successfully planning and implementing programs of similar scope to address the identified need.

The applicant has experience successfully addressing the problem/need with proposed intervention.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not break down the severity of the issue within the ten geographic areas in which grant funds will be used, as it was explained as a national epidemic.

The preliminary study does provide some relevant content, but could not be included in the review since the evidence was not made publicly available by the application date.